

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4256

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 0973

LIMDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER SEES INTERNAL COLLAPSE OF GOJ

REF: KINGSTON 0710

1. SUMMARY: I MET WITH OPPOSITION LEADER EDWARD SEAGA MARCH 2 AT HIS REQUEST. SEAGA EXPRESSED VIEW THAT GOJ IS ON THE VERGE OF AN INTERNAL COLLAPSE AS A RESULT OF THE REMA INCIDENT (REFTEL) AND THE SUBSEQUENT USE OF THE INCIDENT BY PNP MODERATES TO DISCREDIT MINISTER OF HOUSING, TONY SPAULDING. SPAULDING'S CONTROL OF THE "SEAMY SIDE" OF PNP POLITICS (INCLUDING PAYOFFS AND THUGGERY) AND HIS STRONG PERSONAL POWERBASE HAS MADE HIM A POWERFUL MAN IN THE PNP. AS A RESULT, MANLEY IS NOW FACED WITH A "THORNY DECISION." SEAGA SAID HE BELIEVES ISSUE MAY ERUPT BY TIME OF PNP MEETING ON MARCH 26. COMMENT: WITH ALLOWANCE FOR SOME EXAGGERATION, SEAGA'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION CORRESPONDS CLOSELY TO THAT HELD BY OTHER GOJ AND PNP OFFICIALS WE HAVE CONTACTED IN RECENT WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

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2. AT HIS REQUEST, I HAD A BREAKFAST MEETING WITH EDWARD SEAGA, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2. SEAGA REVIEWED THE PRESENT SITUATION IN JAMAICA WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS "EXTREMELY SERIOUS." ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE HE SAID THAT THE PREPAID BAUXITE REVENUES, WHICH WERE PROGRAMMED TO LAST

UNTIL MAY, HAD ALREADY BEEN SPENT. (FYI: NOTWITHSTANDING THIS BOJ DEPUTY GOVERNOR WILSON TOLD US MARCH 1 THAT THE GROSS RESERVES ARE HOLDING STEADY AT ABOUT 50 MILLION DOLLARS.)

3. ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION, SEAGA SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA IS ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE PARTLY BY REASON OF THE WIDE SPLIT IN THE PNP PRECIPITATED BY THE REMA INCIDENT. (FYI: AS REFTEL NOTES, ON FEBRUARY 2 THE MINISTER OF HOUSING ORDERED THE EVICTION OF ILLEGAL TENANTS FROM A HOUSING PROJECT IN REMA, AN AREA OVER WHICH HE SEEKS TO GAIN CONTROL. THE EVICTIONS WERE MARKED BY VIOLENCE, AND TURNED INTO AN UGLY POLICE/THUG CONFRONTATION WITH THE LOSS OF ONE LIFE. END FYI) SEAGA SAID THE INQUIRY INTO THE REMA AFFAIR IS LIKELY TO TURN UP MANY SHOCKING INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC. HE SAID THE INCIDENT IS BEING SEEN BY MODERATES AS A WAY TO DISCREDIT TONY SPAULDING.

4. THIS HAS POSED A SERIOUS DILEMMA FOR THE PNP. SPAULDING HAS THE PARTY'S ONLY REAL POWER BASE IN WESTERN KINGSTON. HE IS CONSIDERED TO BE A LEFTIST, BUT NOT BY REASON OF IDEOLOGY. SEAGA CHARACTERIZED HIM AS THE "HEAD OF THE LUMPEN-PROLETARIAT." SEAGA SAID THAT IF SPAULDING IS DISCREDITED AND DEPOSED, " ALL HELL WILL BREAK LOOSE IN WEST KINGSTON", FUELED BY AN ALREADY RISING UNREST

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RESULTING FROM UNEMPLOYMENT, FOOD SHORTAGES AND HIGH PRICES.

5. SEAGA SAID HE HAS WORD THAT SPAULDING IS MAKING CONTINGENCY PREPARATIONS- INCLUDING THE DISTRIBUTION

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OF GUNS AND AMMUNITION. SPAULDING IS ALSO "PAYING OFF HIS HENCHMEN THROUGH HIS COMPANY, THE CLOVER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, WHICH ANNOUNCED A 15 PERCENT "END OF PROJECT" BONUS IN TODAY'S NEWSPAPERS. SEAGA SAID THAT SPAULDING HAS BEEN USING HIS COMPANY AND MINISTRY OF HOUSING CONTRACTS TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL PAYOFFS TO PNP MINISTERS AND OTHER OFFICIALS. HE NOTED THAT SPAULDING HAS LONG CONTROLLED THE "SEAMY SIDE" OF PNP POLITICS.

6. SEAGA SAID MANLEY IS NOW FACED WITH A THORNY DECISION. HE IS GREATLY BEHOLDEN TO SPAULDING FOR THE SIZE OF THE RECENT PNP VICTORY. SPAULDING PROVIDED THE NUTS AND BOLTS, PERSONNEL, AND INTIMIDATION FORCES IN WEST KINGSTON AND THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND. SPAULDING IS ALSO IN A POSITION TO DISCLOSE DAMAGING INFORMATION ON PAYOFFS. FIRING SPAULDING WOULD APPEASE THE MODERATES (AND POSSIBLY THE IDEOLOGICALLY-PURE LEFT) BUT WOULD LEAVE AN EXPLOSIVE SITUATION ON A SHORT FUSE WITHOUT A MEANS TO DEAL WITH IT.

7. SEAGA SAID SPAULDING IS MAKING AN EFFORT TO
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SHIFT THE BLAME FOR REMA, AND POLITICAL THUGGERY IN GENERAL, TO D K. DUNCAN, THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL MOBILIZATION, BUT THIS WILL NOT HOLD WATER. SEAGA SAID MANLEY HAD PROMISED A RESOLUTION OF THE SITUATION WITHIN TWO MONTHS BUT HE FELT THE MATTER WOULD COME TO A HEAD BEFORE THEN. REMINDED OF THE SCHEDULED MARCH 26 PNP MEETING, SEAGA THOUGHT THIS MIGHT WILL BE THE "TURNING POINT."

8. SEAGA NOTED THAT THE GOJ IS MAKING AN EFFORT TO "SOFTEN UP WASHINGTON" THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTER PATTERSON'S CALL ON SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE AND PATTERSON'S MEETINGS WITH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

EDITORIAL BOARD (WHICH TOOK PLACE MARCH 1 ACCORDING
TO A TELCON I HAD WITH WSJ CORRESPONDENT PAUL),
NEWSWEEK AND OTHER GROUPS. SEAGA MENTIONED THAT
HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT WASHINGTON HIMSELF IN LATE
MAY OR EARLY JUNE (SEPTEL).

9. COMMENT: SEAGA IS GIVEN TO A FAIR AMOUNT OF
OVERSTATEMENT WHEN DISCUSSING THE PROBABLE COURSE
OF EVENTS HERE, BUT DISCOUNTING THIS, THE BASIC
ANALYSIS HE PRESENTS CORRESPONDS WITH OUR OWN, AND
ADHERES CLOSELY TO THE STORIES WE HAVE BEEN HEARING
FROM PNP MODERATES AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL.
SPAULDING WON RE-ELECTION IN DECEMBER BY THE LARGEST
MARGIN OF ANY CANDIDATE AND HE IS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED.
ALTHOUGH THE MODERATES, AND POSSIBLY MANY RADICALS,
ARE DETERMINED TO SEE HIM OUSTED, THIS CANNOT BE
DONE WITHOUT A FIRST-RATE, AND POSSIBLE VIOLENT,
FIGHT.

GERARD

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